



THIS WEEK IN IRAQ



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Top Stories



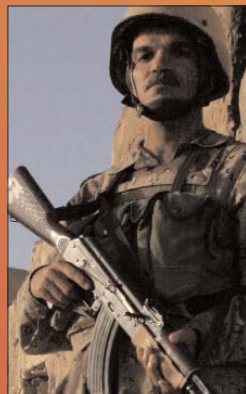
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Lt. Col. John Tien, a battalion commander with the 1st Armored Division hands out candy at a school in Tall Afar. He, along with Mayor Najim Abdullah Jabouri, met with the school's principal to discuss what the school needs to improve learning.

Return to Tall Afar

Story and photos by Spc. Orlando Claffey
This Week in Iraq Editor

The northern city of Tall Afar has seen its share of trouble.

It been the focal point of two major Coalition assaults, a gateway for foreign fighters coming into Iraq from Syria and was a stronghold for insurgent groups, including al Qaeda in Iraq.

Things have changed. In September, more than 5,000 Coalition and Iraqi troops returned to the city, going door-to-door to clear out terrorists.

"What Coalition Forces did in Tall Afar is different from what the other units did in other cities," said Najim Abdullah Jabouri, Tall Afar's mayor and former police chief. "To make a strong bond between civilian and Coalition Forces ... They have to prove

it on the street. They have show to the people that they are here on goodwill. We need fingerprints for the United States in Tall Afar."

The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment cleared the city, as Coalition forces did a year earlier. This time, instead of moving out once the job was done, the unit stayed in the city and began cultivating the Iraqi Police and Army. It took only a month for insurgents to reclaim the city in 2004. Now, six months later, the city remains secure and the Iraqi forces are among the strongest in the nation.

"The Iraqi Army is amazing," said Lt. Col. John Tien, a battalion commander with the 1st Armored Division, the unit

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GENERAL CASEY'S CORNER**Fast facts not the story**

It is easy to rush to judgment, and to failure, about Iraq if you focus on isolated facts and fail to see the whole picture.

Fact: there are car bombs killing scores of civilians in Baghdad.

Fact: terrorists are murdering Iraqis at rates not previously seen. We continue to see the targeting of Iraq's innocent men, women and children, causing a 75 percent increase in the number of civilian casualties.

These are disturbing facts. Taken in isolation they can paint a distorted picture of what is actually going on in Iraq.

Any loss of life is tragic. However, these incidents need to be placed in perspective to understand what is happening here.

Fact: violence is not wide-spread in Iraq. Three of Iraq's provinces, Baghdad, Al Anbar and Salah ad Din, account for nearly 75 percent of all the attacks. The other 15 provinces average less than six attacks daily and 12 average less than two attacks per day. That does not erase what is happening in Baghdad, but it does put it in perspective.

Fact: 70 percent of Iraq's population live without incidents.

Here is what you are not seeing. Operations last fall in the Euphrates River Valley

effectively cut off the major routes for weapons and suicide terrorists. As a result we are not seeing as many of those attacks. The terrorists have to save up for an attack. Since last fall there have not been any "re-attacks" in major cities like Fallujah or Tall Afar by the Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces to drive out the terrorists. Why? There are now more

By Gen. George W. Casey
Multi-National Force - Iraq
Commanding General



than 241,000 trained and equipped ISF members patrolling the streets and neighborhoods of Iraq - 100,000 more than we had last January 2005. In total, about 75 percent of the planned Iraqi Security Forces are out on the streets and in the fight across Iraq. ISF are in the cities and in the

lead.

Due to the increased presence of the ISF and the security measures put in place by the Iraqi government, we have not seen any horrific attacks like the 2004 suicide attacks in Baghdad and Karbala against the Arba'een pilgrims. Also, there is increased emphasis on security in Baghdad. Operation "Scales of Justice" brought in more than 600 U.S. forces and additional Iraqi forces to Baghdad allowing more patrols and checkpoints in the city. Recent operations like "Swarm" and "Northern Lights" were based on intelligence telling us where to find suspected terrorists and caches. Intelligence also led to the recent rescue by British, Iraqi and American forces of three christian activists kidnapped in November.

"The noose for the terrorists is tightening"

Violence that was once widespread is now relegated to three provinces. Terrorists who once roamed freely are now severely constrained. Coalition and ISF operations are placing unrelenting pressure on the terrorists.

Viewed in isolation, a single event can seem overwhelming. However, taken in perspective you can see the noose for the terrorists is tightening as long as we are not distracted, or disheartened, by the desperate acts of the terrorists.

Photos around the Fertile Crescent

U.S. Army Pfc. Ryan Lee from the 1st Armored Division looks across the Al Jazeera Desert in Iraq from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Wednesday. Lee was conducting an air assault mission with Task Force No Mercy.



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Erik Collins, a heavy equipment operator with the 407th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, uses a concrete saw to tear away part of a road at Ali Base on Tuesday.



A Polish Soldier and a Slovakian Soldier from Multi-National Division - Central South write notes during an explosive hazards awareness training class at Camp Echo.



A U.S. Army Soldier takes a break with Iraqi Soldiers from the 4th Iraqi Army Division to eat oven baked bread and sour cream northeast of Samarra during Operation Swarm.

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Tall Afar

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now responsible for safeguarding the city.

"This brigade now is operating independently. They fully understand what it means to win the counter insurgency fight. They have to win the population, and they realize that. This is a competent force, but more importantly, it is a proud force," he said.

"The Iraqi Army has no language issues, no cultural issues and the Iraqi people respect the fact that the Iraqi Security Forces are their security force."

The work of the Iraqi Security Forces has not only impressed the people of Tall Afar, but the American Soldiers too.

Said Tien, after an operation led by Iraqi Police, "We put them in the lead. The great thing was it had been a very bad neighborhood. Then, all of a sudden, it became a very good neighborhood. People said we were just waiting for someone to help us."

Security has long been the focus of the 250,000-person city, made up mostly of Turkmen tribes. With U.S. and Iraqi forces present, each day is bringing more people back to the city and



Rising above Tall Afar, the city's granary collects wheat from farmers across northern Iraq, where it can be refined and exported. It is key to the future of the city.

back on the streets.

"Inside the city, you got more people just trying to better their lives every-day," said Sgt. David Hatton, who is on his second tour in Iraq, the first stationed in Baghdad and Karbala. "Compared to places down south and Mosul, it is pretty quiet. In Tall Afar, you get a lot of waves. Of course, the kids love us. You feel like a rock star with the kids."

What brings the children out is vastly different from what brings the parents out. For more than two years, Tall Afar struggled with insurgency and it will take time for residents to shed their fear.

"We know the city is not completely clean from the terrorists," said the mayor.

"Even with what we stole from the hands of the insurgency, some still have a fear. Privately, they are very happy to see [Coalition Forces]," added the mayor. But many are still wary.

Despite concerns along the blue-door lined streets, shops and markets are reopening.

About 80 shops are

They sacrificed something very valuable. They sacrificed with their Soldiers, human lives.

open, said Tien, which is the best indicator that people feel safe.

"The schools are open," he said. "The markets are starting to open back up, and most importantly, people are starting to move back into the city because they see the hope and protection."

The future is bright for Tall Afar, but there is a long road ahead. The city government and Coalition Forces are working to return services like water and electricity with new wells and substations, and work has begun to restore the city's granary and asphalt plant, two main employers in a city struggling with unemployment. They are the first steps in rejuvenating the city's economy.

"People of Tall Afar are handicapped because they are short of resources," said Najim. "A good friend gives out his hand and helps you stand on your feet. The people of United States have provided the people of Tall Afar more than enough. They sacrificed something very valuable. They sacrificed with their Soldiers, human lives. They sacrificed for the security. Now we start to have peace and security, we can look beyond the security."



Children take a break from a soccer game to greet a U.S. patrol in Tall Afar.

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Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery teach Iraqi Police recruits proper handgun marksmanship at Qayyarah West Base Complex.

Iraqi Police learning basics

Story and photos by Sgt 1st Class David P. Benamati
138th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

QAYYARAH WEST BASE COMPLEX — U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Joseph E. Evans of Columbus, Ohio, developed and runs an Iraqi Police basic skills training course, that brings recruits from across the country to Q-West.

Evans had experience in police training before he joined the Army.

"Before, Iraqi Police were just a reactive police force where they would sit in the police station and wait for something to happen," said Evans. "Now we teach them to be a proactive police force, to go out into the community and to stop crime before it happens."

With limited supplies and facilities, Evans has developed an 11-day course of basic police training. The recruits are taught first aid, Iraqi law, the Iraqi Constitution and prisoner handling.

"It used to be when someone wanted to become a police officer, they would be given a uniform and a handgun and told 'now you are a policeman, go get the bad guys,'" said Evans. "There are policemen who have been on the force for seven years and have never fired their

weapon until yesterday at our range. They never took the weapon apart so they never were able to perform proper maintenance."

Evans and his team teach handgun marksmanship and proper weapons cleaning and maintenance. The length of the next class will be extended to 21 days so the recruits can be given more in-depth training before they go to a police academy, whether it is the Jordanian International Police Training Center, the Mosul Public Service Academy or the Baghdad Police Academy.

"Our goal here is that they have the basic skills of a police officer and perform in an exercise and do well until they go to a police academy," said Evans.



Sgt. 1st Class
Joseph E. Evans



Rebuilder of the Week

Reconstruction and change in Iraq



Command Sgt. Maj. James Green

MOSUL — Whether it's peace or war, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is there to help the U.S. military rebuild nations.

Rebuilding a war-torn country is a daunting task that takes years to complete. One Soldier is helping bring the process along, one day at a time.

Command Sgt. Maj. James Green, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, works closely with the Iraqi government to ensure projects are successful.

"We are the ones that help them get construction going, projects that will help their people," Green said.

A year earlier, Green was in DeSoto, Mo. working in the Missouri Army National Guard. Today he has the responsibility for projects, making sure quality of life issues are met. Green said what we are doing for this country is great and that he is very proud to be able to help the Iraqi people.

"It's been very rewarding, I am able to get out and see Iraqi faces, walk with them, talk with them and see the possible changes we can make in their lives," he said.

"It's been a great experience. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Hero of the Week

Iraqis eagerly taking responsibility for country

Story by Sgt. Sara Wood
American Forces Press Service

The United States is seeing big returns on its three-year investment in Iraqi Security Forces, the U.S. commander in charge of training Iraqi forces said Friday.

Now is a critical time in the U.S. mission in Iraq and U.S. forces are focusing more and more on transitioning to Iraqi forces, said Army Lt. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, commander of Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq.

"We are as resolute in transitioning Iraqi staffs into the lead in headquarters and ministries as we are in transitioning Iraqi commanders into the lead in the field," he said. "It's important to note that our Iraqi counterparts are eager for the responsibility."

Two divisions, 13 brigades and 49 battalions of the Iraqi Army and two brigades and six battalions of the national police are responsible for their own battlespace, Dempsey said. By July, Iraqi Security Forces will be responsible for security along all 2,256 miles of Iraq's borders, he added.

Much of the battlespace the Iraqis are responsible for is in secured areas or those with small populations.

Dempsey said that 50 percent of Baghdad is controlled by Iraqi forces and by the end of the year, when Iraqis are projected to control 75 percent of the country, much of that will include heavily populated and dangerous areas.

As Iraqi Security Forces improve, they are becoming more of a threat to insurgents and therefore are being targeted more, Dempsey said. Attacks on Iraqi Security Forces are nothing new, but the Iraqi forces are no longer running from threats as they used to.

"It's important to note that the Iraqi police are standing their ground," he said.

To reduce sectarian conflicts, U.S. Forces and the Iraqi government are working to balance the security forces ethnically, Dempsey said.

The odd-numbered divisions and the 6th Division in the Iraqi Army are already diverse because they were recruited and formed nationally, he said. The even-numbered divisions started as Iraqi National Guard units, so they were less diverse and are being adjusted over time. The two national police forces, the commandos and the public order brigades, are being merged together

"It's important to note that the Iraqi police are standing their ground."

to even out ethnic differences.

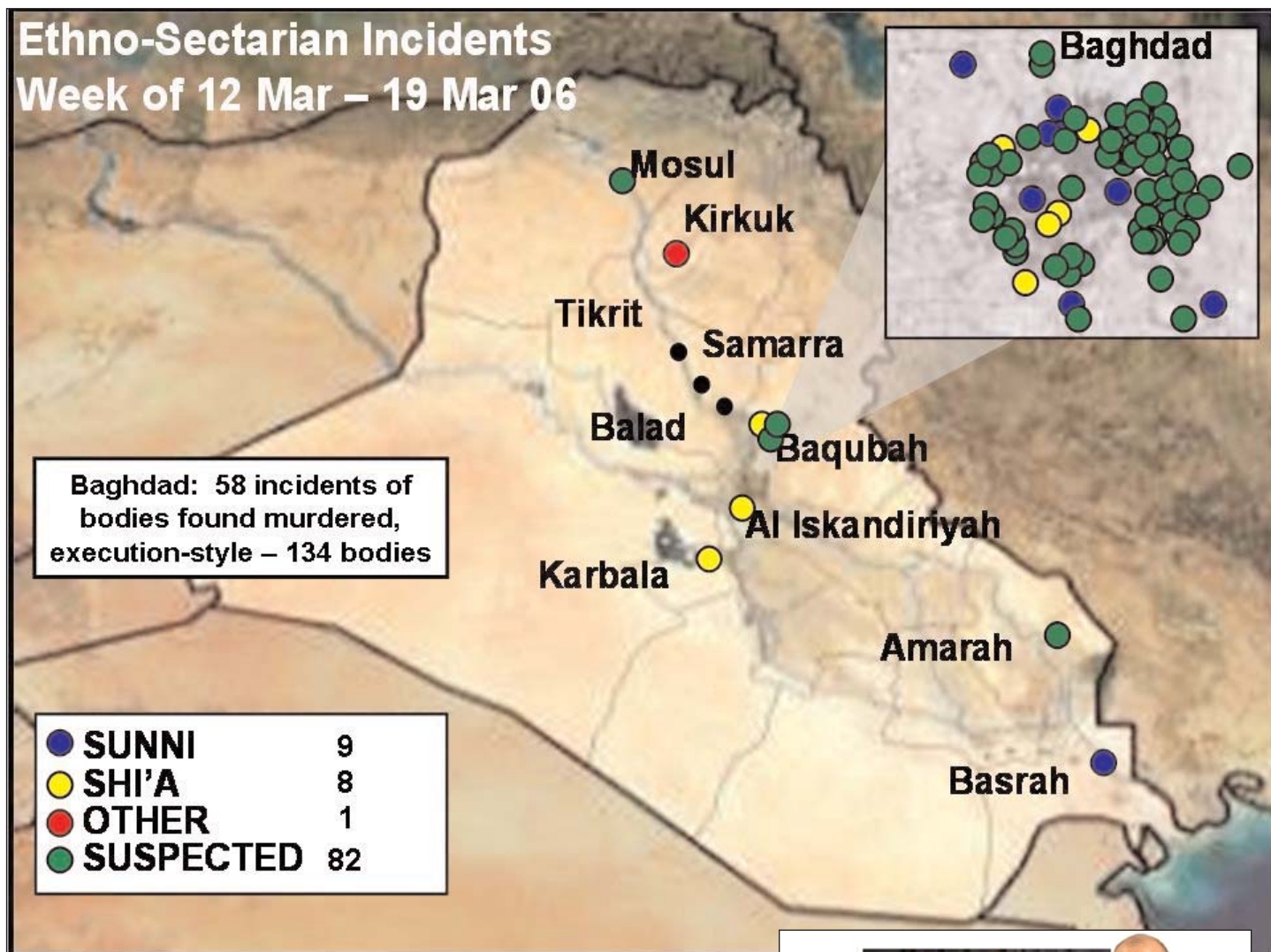
As the security forces mature, internal corruption and criminal conduct are inevitable, Dempsey said, but the U.S. and Iraqi governments are creating a system to discourage and punish this behavior. These efforts are to counter the ideology of the former regime, when corruption, embezzlement and human rights abuses were condoned.

"It's not that these things are not going to occur," he said. "But if they begin to punish conduct like that, change leaders and publicize it as a way of gaining public confidence, then I think we will have gotten where we need to be."

U.S. forces working on the transition efforts are doing so in a quiet, unselfish way, so the Iraqis can be recognized for the work they are doing in their own country, Dempsey said. He highlighted the fact that in a short time, they have worked with the Coalition to bring their country far from its oppressive past.

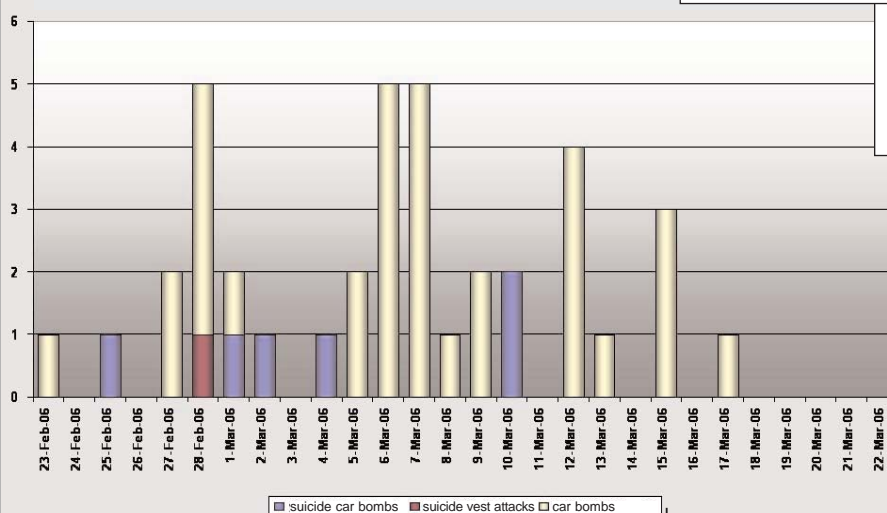
"When you consider that we're only three years into this ... our Iraqi counterparts deserve a lot of credit for their own perseverance and their own dedication to try to make this into something better than it is," he said.

Ethno-Sectarian Incidents Week of 12 Mar – 19 Mar 06



Attacks in Baghdad Province

MNF-I Weekly Press Conference



Targeting trouble

"We are dealing with a vicious enemy. He wanted to stop the democratic process. He couldn't stop the two elections in the 2005. He couldn't stop the drafting and ratification of the constitution last October. So now he's focused on inflaming sectarian violence to drive a wedge between the components of the Iraqi community -- the Shi'as, the Sunnis and the Kurds. And there is indeed a spike in what we term ethnosectarian instances."

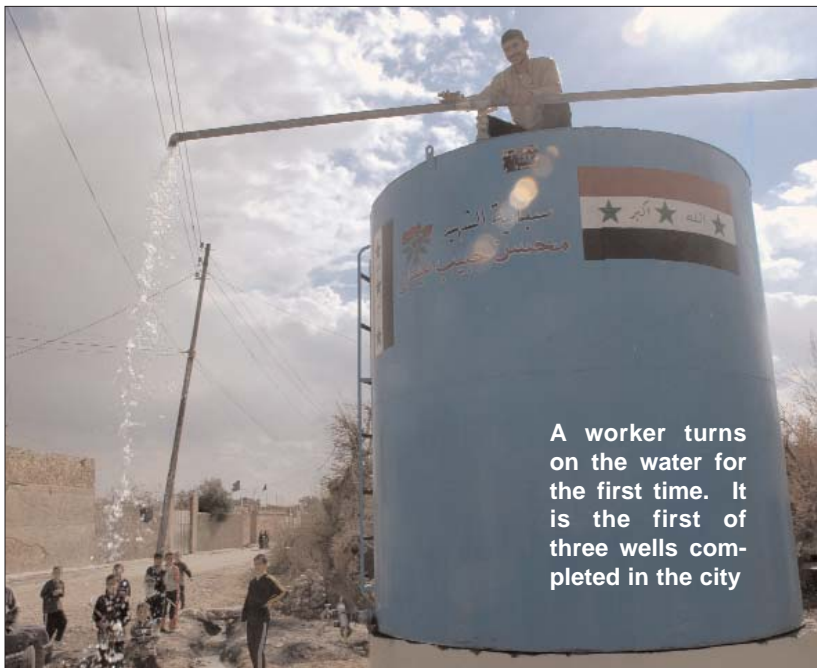
Fighting back

"On the 12th of March we started Operation Scales of Justice - increase security force presence inside of Baghdad, increase the number of patrols, increase the number of checkpoints. And the effect was it precluded the enemy's ability to put in car bombs, suicide car bombs and suicide vest attacks."

"And you can see, over the last five days we had a period of time where those were nonexistent in Baghdad. It wasn't because the enemy didn't want to put them out there; it's because he didn't have the capability."



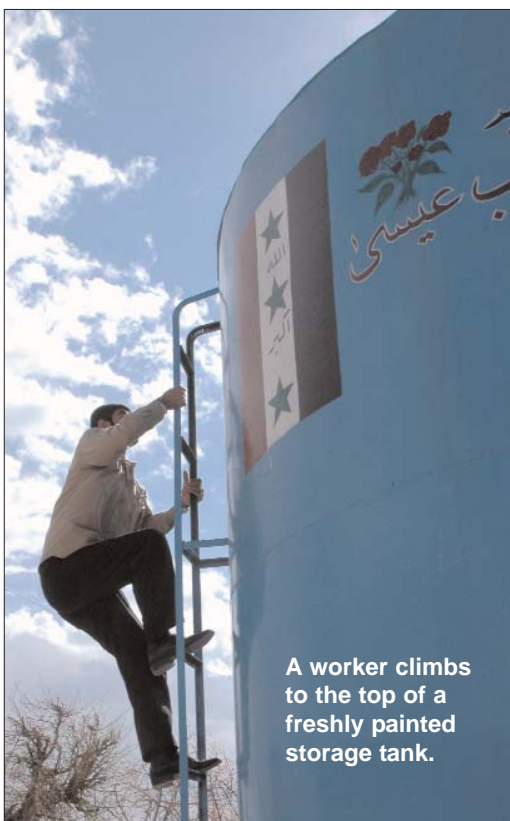
An informal party erupted at the site of a new well as the water was turned on for the first time.



A worker turns on the water for the first time. It is the first of three wells completed in the city

Tall Afar wells boost water supply

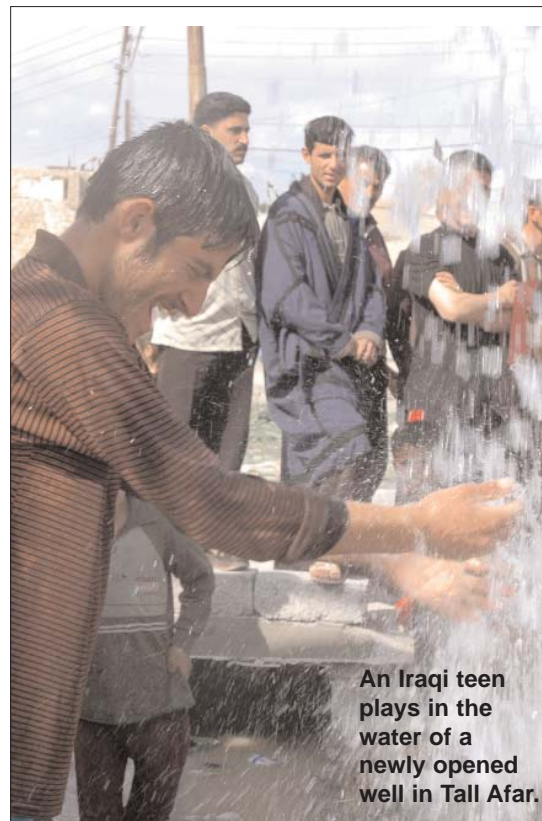
U.S. Army photos by Spc. Orlando Claffey



A worker climbs to the top of a freshly painted storage tank.



Wiring for a water pump is strung along the wall of a pumping station.



An Iraqi teen plays in the water of a newly opened well in Tall Afar.

Catching the terrorists before they kill

Story by Sgt. Kristopher Joseph
Multinational Corps-Iraq Public Affairs Office

Northern Lights

Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces, about 1,400 troops, kicked off Operation Northern Lights Wednesday to disrupt anti-Iraqi forces and to find and destroy terrorist caches in the Abu Ghraib area west of Baghdad.

The joint operation began with the 6th Iraqi Army Division and the 1st Marine Regiment moving to blocking positions by ground before Soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division flew by helicopter onto the objective to conduct a search.

By late afternoon, about 400 Soldiers from the 6th Iraqi Army Division discovered five weapons caches. They also detained a suspected terrorist near one of the caches.

At another cache site, terrorists attacked Iraqi Security Forces with small-arms fire, wounding one Iraqi policeman. Iraqi Soldiers returned fire, wounding and capturing a terrorist.

Hide and Seek

Task Force Band of Brothers Soldiers captured two men near Balad on Thursday before they could detonate an improvised explosive device they had buried along a road leading to the city.

Soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division noticed the men hiding in the trees along the road. The Soldiers investigated and discovered a spool of wire leading to the men's position.

After questioning the men, the Soldiers quickly found and secured the IED. The troops also confiscated two assault rifles, shovels and the detonating device the men were preparing.

Terrorist bombs have taken a heavy toll against Iraqi civilians. Four Iraqis were killed on Friday when a bomb was detonated outside a mosque in Khalis, and 17 civilians in northern Iraq have been wounded by IEDs during the past week.

Eagle Eyes

Soldiers from the 4th Iraqi Army Division detained a suspect Friday after 101st Airborne Division Soldiers discovered an improvised explosive device



U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Michael J. Sandberg
U.S. Navy Airman Courtney Luckerson prepares to connect a marker float onto a sweep wire for a mine sweeping mission in the Persian Gulf.

during a combined combat patrol near Kirkuk.

The combined patrol was traveling along a major road outside of Kirkuk when Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, spotted the IED on the side of the road. Soldiers

from the two units immediately secured the site, rerouting traffic to a side road. Within minutes of securing the area, the IED detonated, causing no damage to personnel or equipment.

See OPERATIONS, next page



U.S. Air Force photo By Staff Sgt. Aaron Allmon

Soldiers from the 1st Armored Division dismount a helicopter during an air assault in the Al Jazeera Desert on Wednesday.

Operations

Coalition Forces spotted a man who lived in a house nearby fleeing on motorcycle. The patrol quickly detained the suspect who tested positive for explosive residue.

Iraqi Security Forces, working hand-in-hand with American Soldiers, continue to improve in the combined fight against terrorism. Combined offensive missions in the Kirkuk Province, planned and led by the Iraqi Army, have netted more than 25 terrorist suspects in the past week.

City of Dreams

Iraqi Soldiers detained a suspected terrorist and uncovered a weapons cache in Baghdad Thursday.

Soldiers from the 6th Iraqi Army Division detained a suspected terrorist at a checkpoint in the Thawra district. The detainee is on the Iraqi Army's high-value target list.

Later in Al Mansour, 6th Iraqi Army Division Soldiers, supported by U.S. Soldiers from a 4th Infantry Division military transition team, discovered a weapons cache. The cache consisted of mortar rounds, an anti-tank mine and three propane tanks.

Stop children, what's that sound...

4th Infantry Division Soldiers reported an audible explosion in southern Baghdad Thursday.

"They found remains of a man about 50 meters from emplaced mortar shells."

Upon arrival, they found remains of a man about 50 meters from emplaced mortar shells.

After an initial investigation, officials concluded the victim was possibly killed by a roadside bomb he was placing in a hole.

Soldiers also reported 15 holes lined up in a row, about two feet wide and six feet apart.

An explosive ordnance disposal unit was called to clear the area of other possible improvised explosive devices.

There is an I in this team

Soldiers of the 4th Iraqi Army Division and 101st Airborne Division conducted combined offensive operations in and around Kirkuk on Friday, simultaneously searching five villages in the region for suspected terrorists.

Operation Scorpion began in the early morning with Soldiers from the Iraqi Army's 2nd Brigade systematically moving through the villages, searching for selected targets based on Iraqi-generated intelligence. The 1st Battalion, 327th

Infantry Regiment supported operations at each of the five villages.

The operation was developed and planned by Maj. Gen. Anwar, commander of the Iraqi 2nd Brigade, and his staff. This is the second major operation developed and conducted by the Iraqi 2nd Brigade in the past two months.

Iraqi medics get a hand from Coalition

Story and photos by Sgt. Waine D. Haley
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



Iraqi Army medic Master Sgt. Mohamed Hussain receives medication from Maj. Dean Allen Seehusen. The 101st Airborne Division medics donated only basic supplies to see how their Iraqi counterparts handle distribution.

SAMARRA — The 101st Airborne Division's 187th Infantry Regiment Military Transition Team is teaming up with all sections of the Regiment to help build a well-rounded Iraqi Army.

The 690th Medical Company is working with the Iraqi 4th Division's medics to help evaluate what training and supplies they need to become self-sufficient.

"We've been evaluating their medical knowledge and conducting some training on equipment, diagnosis, and medical treatment," said Maj. Dean Allen Seehusen, surgeon for the 101st Airborne Division. "Their knowledge level is good. Their diagnosis is right on the money. They just don't have the supplies."

Seehusen said the upper-level medics have a good medical understanding. He is pleasantly surprised at how much knowledge the Iraqis actually have.

Master Sgt. Mohamed Hussain, medic with the Iraqi Army, was a medic in the former Iraqi Army for 25 years. He is now the Iraqi Army's medical representative from Forward Operating Base 7.

"I came here today to get more medical experience," said Hussain. "I am in charge of four other medics, which are also receiving training."

The teams get together six times a week; half of the time at FOB Brassfield-Mora and half the time at FOB 7. This allows the Iraqis to see and learn how the Coalition Forces' facilities work and this allows Coalition medics to evaluate the medical facilities at FOB 7.

The training the MiTT is doing is not unique, but the way they are doing it is. The Army has nothing in place for this kind of training, so the medical unit has had to design their own system.

"As far as I know, we are one of a kind because all we were given was the mission to interface with them medically and try to improve their medical infrastructure," said Seehusen. "We were not given specifics on how to do the mission, so my guess is that we are doing it uniquely."

The Coalition medics will first train the Iraqi medics on medications; what the medications are and what they do. Then they will give them small quantities to see if they distribute and use the medications properly.

At this point, the medication training involves some antibiotics and cold medicines.

"Once we prove they know how to use the medications appropriately, we will feel more comfortable helping them get the medications through their supply line," Seehusen said.

Rebuilding Iraq

Projects that are shaping a nation

Mosul

About 200,000 people in east Mosul have fresh water with the installation of more than three miles of pipe.

Dahuk

About 5,000 homes in the Dahuk Province have more reliable electricity thanks to a new substation and feeder lines.



Tikrit

A refurbished substation in Tikrit should give more than 29,000 residents stable electricity.

Baghdad

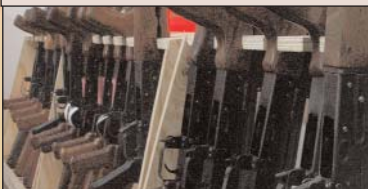
Three checkpoints in the Rashid neighborhood of Baghdad have been upgraded, adding to the protection of more than 20,000 residents passing through the area.

Ramadi

Security has been increased in Ramadi with the completion of a berthing building and armory.

Baghdad

The al Zuhor Police station in the Husseinia section of Baghdad is complete, giving more than 315 patrolmen a secure place to train.



Babil

Road repairs over more than 40 miles of highway in Babil will help about 18,000 residents travel between Radwaniya and Yusufiyah.

Baghdad

The restoration of the principal sewage collection system in the Rashid neighborhood in Baghdad should help about 2 million people.



Iraqis and Operations

**As their numbers blossom,
the Iraqi Army is shedding
its little brother image**

Photos can be found on www.mnf-iraq.com



U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Samuel Peterson

Iraqi Ministry of Defense Public Order Brigade officers conduct patrol tactics training with U.S. Army Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division at Forward Operating Base Falcon in Baghdad on March 20.



Iraqi Soldiers receive training from U.S. Soldiers with the 172nd Infantry Brigade on how to react to contact at Camp Aggies on Wednesday.

U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. John M. Foster



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Adaeus G. Brooks

An Iraqi Soldier with the 1st Division digs through twigs and dirt in search of weapon caches while patrolling through the Euphrates River area in Fallujah.



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Adaeus G. Brooks

Iraqi Soldiers with the 1st Division guard a house being searched by fellow Soldiers in the Euphrates River area of Fallujah. The Soldiers are in search of items that could be used to make improvised explosive devices.